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UNCLAS LJUBLJANA 000058

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EB/TPP/ABT/BTT/SPIRNAK, LERSTEN, AND KOCH  
AMEMBASSY VIENNA FOR FAS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAGR](#) [ECON](#) [ETRD](#) [TBIO](#) [SI](#)

SUBJECT: SLOVENIA: 2006 BIOTECHNOLOGY OUTREACH FUNDS  
PROPOSAL

REF: 05 STATE 233448

05 LJUBLJANA 0724

11. SUMMARY: Slovenia is at a critical policy making juncture on agricultural biotechnology. An EU member state since May 2004, Slovenia appears to be taking a more pragmatic approach to the adoption of biotechnology than some of its neighbors. Post sees a window of opportunity to influence policy and encourage Slovenia to create a balanced set of guidelines that are in line with EU regulations and would be implemented according to the spirit of the law as well. Decision makers will develop and implement Slovenia's policy on biotechnology and agricultural coexistence in 2006. A small nation surrounded by states with vociferous anti-biotech lobbies opposed to development of a science-based, open-minded policy on biotechnology, Slovenia is poised to become a key voice of reason on biotechnology and co-existence. Post requests financial assistance from EB biotech funds in order to support a seminar on biotechnology and to develop and publish educational materials in Slovene on the benefits of biotech. End Summary.

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SEMINAR  
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12. In FY 05, Mission sponsored a seminar on agricultural coexistence in cooperation with the Foreign Agricultural Service in Vienna. The event helped pave the way for open, science-based debate on biotech and coexistence. The conference attracted nearly seventy participants, including members of parliament, key policy-makers from Slovene Ministries of Agriculture, Environment, and Health, conventional and organic farmers, academics, scientists, and U.S. Embassy officers from neighboring countries and USEU (ref B).

13. The coexistence seminar was the first step in Post's long term strategy of influencing the biotech policy direction of the GOS. Over the course of the past three months, COM has written several letters to senior Ag Ministry officials encouraging the prompt and balanced development of coexistence policies. COM has also met with influential members of the agricultural and food industries to discuss the potential for use of genetically enhanced products in Slovenia. Post Econoff and Econ Specialist continue to reach out to Slovenia's agricultural community and plan to meet in early February with the director of the largest domestic umbrella farming organization. Post plans to further build on this momentum with a planned late February 2006 visit by Chief biotech negotiator, Madelyn Spirnak.

14. We believe that the next step in our strategy is to engage more deeply with the GOS's coexistence policy working group, which we anticipate will be fully-formed and functioning by the end of Q1 2006. To this end, Post requests biotech funds to support a targeted workshop in May 12006. This workshop will bring together senior U.S. experts and members of the GOS's coexistence working group for a day-long discussion of the benefits for Slovenia of biotechnology, as well as best practices for creating an open, rules-based regulatory environment. Post will work closely with FAS Vienna to identify experienced speakers from the USDA's biotech agency and from academia. In addition, we will also invite experts from EU governments that already have biotech-friendly policies in place. Along with the request for biotech funds, Post anticipates leveraging funding from multiple sources to support this project, including Business Facilitation Incentive Funds as well as resources collected for commercial services provided by post.

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EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS  
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15. Despite the relative pragmatism of Slovene policymakers on biotechnology, the general public is often misinformed and lacks understanding of environmental and health impacts

of GMOs and the benefits of genetically enhanced products. Post contacts in private business and in government ministries note that even if Slovenia adopts a GMO-friendly set of rules and policies, creating positive public awareness will be a significant challenge.

16. With support from EB biotech funds, Post proposes to adapt USG-produced informational products into a set of Slovene-language educational materials to explain the

benefits of agbiotech and dispel some of the myths about the drawbacks. The target audience for these materials will be the farming community as well as the general public. The materials will focus on the improved yield potential for farmers and the reduced need for pesticides as a benefit to consumers. This grass-roots based effort extolling the safety and virtues of biotechnology should begin to create a more positive view of GMOs. In addition, Post proposes to create a Slovene-language page within our external website which would carry the same messages as in the print brochure.

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EXPECTED COSTS  
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17. Post anticipates that the cost of these programs would be approximately as follows:

Seminar: \$7,500

The cost for this one-day event would include speaker fees, travel, and per diem for two U.S. speakers as well as rental of conference facilities for an anticipated participation of approximately 20-30 people.

Educational Materials: \$2,500

The cost would include anticipated charges for copyright permission, translation, and publishing.

Total Biotech Funds Request from Embassy Ljubljana for FY 2006: \$10,000.

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POST CONTACT INFORMATION  
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18. Post point of contact for both programs is Economic and Commercial Officer John Nylin, nylinjd@state.gov.

ROBERTSON

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